



Symphony Senior Living
In concert with your life

September 21, 2020

Hello Residents, Families and Team Members,

It has been a LONNNNNGGG year – wow did anyone think we would be September and still worried about Covid 19. We remain COVID free in our buildings. Thanks to YOU – our residents, families and team members!!!

We know that the most vulnerable populations remain seniors, so keeping things clean and contact limited will help to ensure we do not have a severe outbreak. We continue to take a conservative approach to anything that maybe a source of infection: staff remain dedicated to only Symphony properties, Visitors have been encouraged to visit outside, test often, not wander in the community and not present with symptoms. We take a property by property approach to visitors as some homes have higher acuity and more dementia – increasing the risk, should someone get Covid in house. We are also aware and work, case by case, on situations to ensure mental health and wellbeing of BOTH residents and families. We also work case by case on team member situations as they arise. I am directly involved in those discussions, as they arise as are our nurses and managers.

We have all changed our habits and routines, including myself. I used to visit communities every month I now limit my visits and communicate via zoom video calls. Recently visiting for the first time in many months and staying offsite at a hotel instead of my usual onsite accommodation. During my recent visits I noticed some areas for improvement including our screening process and documentation. You may have noticed a few changes. I am also looking for infection control adherence and quality control for our residents. I also monitor to ensure Symphony quality standards for our most vulnerable residents with dementia care, those who may not always be able to voice issues is maintained.

Two week visiting hiatus “Break”: September 25 to October 10th.

Due to the recent uptick in Covid cases in Ottawa, we are instituting a two-week visiting break. You have this week to do a visit or drop off, prior to this break and then during the break we ask that only Essential Visitors book appointments: that is limited to those attending a very ill resident or other special circumstances as maybe discussed with the property managers. If all goes well, we will reopen to visitors for Thanksgiving. If you are concerned about this and have a special situation you feel is not being heard, I encourage you to reach out to me directly AFTER you have discussed your concern with the community Executive Director. lbrush@symphonyseniorliving.com

Visiting after this period, will likely be in house due to the weather changing: whenever possible if you can stay outside then please do so for everyone’s sake. We will investigate obtaining a few propane heaters for the outdoor areas, to assist with comfort during the shoulder months. Each home will be responsible for developing specific visitor protocols depending on their area, resident mix, and physical configurations. I work with each of them on these plans.



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Inspections:

During the past few months, a couple of our homes have had RHRA or Public Health unit inspections. We did not have any major issues, but we did have a few items of recommendations which have been implemented. In a few cases we had recommendations that did not make sense from a quality of life perspective, particularly for residents with dementia. In those cases, we weighed risk to reward and implemented items that made sense but did not make life overly restrictive or horrible for the residents. We will continue to allow RHRA and PHU to inspect as long as the inspector has not been in a Covid positive building in the past 30 days. Like us, I assume these well-funded and professional government bodies, can cohort staff and ensure no cross contamination – we all already know that PPE is only partially effective against Covid, once an outbreak occurs.

Back to School:

We have entered back to school time and in some situations where non-contact learning was not available, we have asked some student staff members to take a leave of absence for September or longer, to ensure this does not affect us.

Ministry of Health and RHRA Guidelines and Reopening clarifications:

You may have seen on various websites the “home reopening guidelines” and other information. We are up to date on all the guidelines and recommendations. That said, you may find we have higher requirements or more stringent rules than that being recommended or guiding LTC homes. Here is why – we managed to stay covid free because we moved sooner than being told by the MOH – we are a private business and as such if we have an outbreak the government won’t fund us at 100% full like they do for LTC homes currently – they also won’t refill us with customers or provide more funding, if many of our residents are infected and pass away, like they do in LTC homes.

So again, we constantly balance the needs and mental health of our resident’s families and team members with the risk of a Covid outbreak. We have sought legal advice on this and they have confirmed that MOHLTC and PHU guidelines are minimums we need to adhere too; we are able to ask for reasonable protocols above these guidelines, particularly as anyone not willing to abide by the more stringent guidelines always has the free will and choice to leave and seek other accommodation or care – something not always available in LTC homes or hospitals. We hope you also see the value in our screening, restrictions and other measures and the fact we have been able to maintain covid free homes and more importantly, that have maintained internal social structures and support for the residents to get through a very challenging year.

In short – it’s not about “rights” it’s about balancing safety and quality of life for all.

PPE:



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Our masks, gowns, sanitizer and gloves inventories are good. We are adding more stock to the precautionary inventory in case we have a fall outbreak.

Testing:

We continue to offer testing to all residents, staff and families that need easy and timely access to testing. Please contact your community if you need to be tested. Asymptomatic families can access onsite precautionary testing free of charge; symptomatic families must go to a testing center.

As we enter back to school time, we are offering testing for any visitors or family that are concerned about schools which may have gone into outbreak and they wish to visit a loved one. Many of our staff of school age children are also accessing testing more frequently as a precaution.

With the uptick in cases in Ontario we remain careful when sending residents to hospital or other medical appointments if not needed. Our house doctors have been amazing during this pandemic and continue to work virtually and onsite only as needed. If your loved one needs to go to the hospital, we will reach out to you to determine the best course of action. As always, we will seek to reduce an unnecessary ER visit.

Questions I would be asking the doctor and/or our wellness coordinator/ED prior to authorizing a send to hospital of my loved one:

- 1) What will be done in hospital given the situation that cannot be done in house?
- 2) What is the likelihood that an effective treatment is available in hospital, given your current health and condition?
- 3) Will quality of end of life (if that's the case) be improved or reduced if a transfer to hospital?
- 4) Can whatever is being suggested, be done in house with Doctor guidance?
- 5) Have we done all we can remotely, before a transfer to hospital?

Again, a very sincere thank you to all the Residents, Family and Team members for a very long but safe six months. We hope that a vaccine will be found in 2021 and that we can get back to normal, until then we want to ensure we provide a safe, pleasant and engaged living situation for our residents, connection to family and friends and safe work place for our team.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brush
CEO and Founder
Symphony Senior Living
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